

Iraq reports U.S. marines' harassment

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq said Saturday U.S. marines had harassed Iraqi researchers on an environmental study mission inside its territorial waters. The Iraqi News Agency, reporting from the southern port of Basra, said the team was exposed to "surveillance, questioning and provocation from U.S. marines during a scientific voyage." The research ship Al Shurouq was to study pollution of Iraqi waters as a result of the Gulf war and its effect on fish stocks. The research team, from Basra University, was on its fourth mission in Gulf waters. The U.S. navy is patrolling the Gulf to check compliance with U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait in August last year.

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Hamas loses Hebron election

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The Muslim fundamentalist group Hamas has lost another election in the Israeli occupied territories. In elections to the directorate of Hebron's 2,000-member University Graduates' League, the Nationalist Party associated with the mainstream movement Fatah won a majority of the votes. "We in the national bloc are with the peace process... most of the Palestinian street is with the peace process," said Sufian Sultan, one of the Nationalist Party candidates. Hebron is considered a West Bank stronghold of Hamas. In June, fundamentalists won six out of 11 seats on the board of the chamber of commerce elections in the town. The elections Friday marked the second time since the Middle East peace conference in Madrid last month that Muslim fundamentalists have been defeated in elections in their traditional strongholds.

10 killed, 39 hurt in Yemen tremor

SANA'A (R) — At least 10 people were killed and 39 injured Friday when an earthquake measuring four on the Richter scale hit the province of Ebb, some 230 kilometres south of the capital Sana'a, Radio Sanaa reported. It said most of the casualties were from Jebel Bahri village, where 17 houses collapsed. Nine people were wounded when 50 houses were partially damaged in the neighbouring town of Al-Udayn. Another 37 houses were damaged in the earthquake, the first to kill Yemen since a major tremor that killed 3,000 people and made 400,000 others homeless in 1982.

Thatcher visits Kuwait

LONDON (R) — Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher flew to Kuwait Saturday on a short private visit to launch an institute promoting British business in the emirate. The Kuwait ruling family holds Mrs. Thatcher in high esteem, crediting her with showing resolve during the Gulf crisis. Mrs. Thatcher was prime minister when Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990 and was among the first Western leaders to send thousands of troops to confront Iraqi forces. She resigned a year ago. The Thatcher Institute will seek to foster trading links between Britain and Kuwait, Kuwaiti sources said.

Honecker wants to go to Chile

BONN (R) — Former East German leader Erich Honecker, favoured by Bonn on manslaughter charges, has told Soviet officials he wants to live out his life in Chile with his family, a German magazine reported Saturday. "I am seeking a humanitarian solution with a family reunion in Chile," Stern magazine quoted Mr. Honecker as telling Deputy Soviet Foreign Minister Yuri Bezmenov. Stern said it was the first official contact between the former German leader and the Soviet government since the election of Mr. Honecker's ex-tradition to Germany has been raised. Mr. Honecker, who fled into Soviet exile earlier this year, is wanted by Bonn on charges arising from his shoot-to-kill orders to guards at the Berlin Wall and East German border. Bonn wants him returned but there is no extradition treaty between Bonn and Moscow.

U.N. approves new commission to fight crime

VERSAILLES, (R) — Ministers from 108 countries Saturday approved the creation of a new United Nations commission to fight crime. "Crime prevention and penal justice has become one of the U.N.'s priorities," French Foreign Affairs Minister Michel Delebarre told a news conference at the end of a three-day ministerial meeting in Versailles, just outside Paris. "The states (of the U.N.) have decided to tackle this question directly by creating a member commission at the next meeting of the United Nations economic and social council in February," Mr. Delebarre said.

Sharif Zeid outlines government priorities and tasks

Democratisation and public freedoms as well as economic improvement and administrative reforms on the top of list

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Saturday convened the first session of his new cabinet and outlined the priorities and tasks that face the government.

The prime minister welcomed the cabinet members, wishing them success in carrying out their tasks and urging them to give due concern to the requirements of the current crucial and serious stage with all that it entails to overcome the present hardships.

The Cabinet reviewed in detail the contents of the Royal letter of designate to the new government and discussed its principles and guidelines.

With regard to the domestic policy, Sharif Zeid emphasised the need to speed up the formulation of legislation and measures that can corroborate the democratic process, particularly the

creation of political parties and the protection of public freedoms, especially the right of expression. He stressed the need for full cooperation with the Lower House of Parliament. With regard to the economic situation, the prime minister emphasised the need to finalise the economic development plan and the economic restructuring programme within a national perspective which does not overlook the social dimension, especially in the right of the growing unemployment and the noticeable increase in poverty.

The government, he said, should take speedy measures to deal with these two serious issues with seriousness and firmness. He said focus should also be given to finding suitable climate to pave the ground for drastic solutions "which can come about

through tackling the chronic economic issues plaguing the country.

Sharif Zeid said that this government or any other can by no means achieve a great deal if the state of affairs persists within

public administration.

The prime minister described government business as slow and characterised by elaborate procedures and delays without offering real efficient service to the public.

He called for national effort to place the question of reforming public administration at the top of priorities.

He stressed that such reform should be conducted within a deep and comprehensive perspective, giving due attention to training and organisation.

This reform should not take the sole form of transferring employees without any definite purpose or plan, he added.

The prime minister stressed the importance of giving due respect to the citizens and offering them the opportunity to have access to any source of information and knowledge.



Former prime ministers Zaid Rifa'i (right) and Taher Masri (centre) Saturday call on Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker to congratulate

him on his appointment as premier and the formation of his government (Petra photo)

PLO asks Washington for same treatment as in Madrid

TUNIS (R) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) said Saturday it was not opposed to Washington as the venue for further Middle East peace talks but expected its shadow delegation to be accorded the same facilities and treatment it received in Madrid.

The White House Friday issued invitations to Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Palestinians to a fresh round of peace talks on Dec. 4 in Washington.

Only Jordan has accepted the invitation. Israel, Lebanon and Palestinians said they were still considering it.

PLO spokesman Abud Abdul Rahman said the PLO was examining the invitation that was handed to Palestinians.

He said the PLO would respond in a few days' time but "in principle (it) is not against the choice of Washington as the venue for the negotiations."

Mr. Abdul Rahman added that the PLO "asks the United States to grant it the same facilities to its invisible delegation as given by the Spanish authorities when the peace conference opened in Madrid."

Palestinians were represented by delegations from the Israeli-occupied territories at the opening stages of the Arab-Israeli talks in Madrid last month, but the PLO sent a delegation that worked behind the scenes.

Israel rejects any direct contact with the PLO.

"We want PLO officials to be present in Washington to facilitate the negotiations," said Mr. Abdul Rahman, who was in Madrid with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's advisor Nabil Shaath.

"If we get signals from Washington that we will have the same facilities as in Madrid, there will be no further obstacles in the way of Palestinian participation," he added.

Washington broke off a dialogue with the PLO in June last year after an abortive Palestinian guerrilla raid on the Israeli coast by a PLO faction. Since then Washington has been reluctant to grant visas to Palestinians.

Several members of the PLO said this week the dialogue with the United States should resume as a precondition for holding the talks in Washington.

In Madrid official PLO representatives were given special privileges and facilities for their security and contacts.

The PLO has an embassy-like office in the Spanish capital but no such facility in Washington.

Israel wants more talks with U.S. on bilaterals

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel will hold further discussions with the United States before responding to an invitation to renew Middle East peace talks in Washington next month, an Israeli official said Saturday.

The head of Israel's government press office, Yossi Olmert, told Reuters Israel would need some time to consider its response.

"It will take some time," he said. "We are considering. We will have more talks with the Americans."

Mr. Olmert said Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was leaving Washington Saturday night and was due here Sunday, when the Israeli cabinet meets.

The White House on Friday issued invitations to Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Palestinians to a fresh round of peace talks on Dec. 4 in Washington.

On Saturday only Jordan had accepted the invitation while Israel, Lebanon and Palestinians said they were still considering it.

Mr. Shamir wanted to follow October's Madrid peace conference in early November with further bilateral talks in the Middle East with Israel's Arab neighbours. The Arab delegations rejected this.

For the Palestinians, Washington is a preferred venue, but spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi said they would seek clarification before replying to the invitation.

"There are several problems. The first is that there is no U.S.-PLO dialogue at present... and we do have a visa problem for the Palestinian leadership," she told reporters.

Several members of the Palestine Liberation Organisation said

this week the group's dialogue with the United States should resume as a precondition for holding the talks in Washington.

But Dr. Ashrawi said the Palestinian response would not be conditioned on this or any other issue. The PLO is not officially a party to the talks.

Both Israelis and Palestinians regarded the U.S. move as consistent with Washington's strategy to get Israel and the Arabs to the bargaining table.

Middle East political analysts said Israel would come under heavy international pressure if it did not accept the invitation, while a negative response would also affect its already strained relations with the United States.

Asked what would happen if any of the parties refused to attend, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said: "Obviously it would be an unfortunate choice."

"It would obviously be very disappointing, not only to the co-sponsors (of the talks, the United States and the Soviet Union) but I think to many countries and peoples around the world."

Israel contended on Friday the territories it seized in the 1967 Middle East war were vital to its "security" and that the importance of "strategic depth" was recognised in a recent accord between NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

Referring to the West Bank, Israeli U.N. Representative Yoram Aridor told the General Assembly: "The mountainous terrain of Judea and Samaria provide Israel with the necessary topographical advantage that would be crucial in withstanding any attack from the east."

"We want to express our desire for a just and lasting peace based on justice and international leg-

Palestinian, Israeli activists urge their leaders to work for peace

RAMALLAH, Occupied West Bank (R) — Palestinians and Israelis met in the occupied West Bank Saturday to urge their leaders to seek peace in resumed Middle East talks.

The biggest such gathering in the Israeli-held territories since the Gulf war came as leaders on both sides weighed a U.S. invitation to peace talks in Washington on Dec. 4 after a ceremonial opening in Madrid last October.

Middle East political analysts said Israel would come under heavy international pressure if it did not accept the invitation, while a negative response would also affect its already strained relations with the United States.

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There was an exchange of opinions on the situation surrounding the peace process with a stress on organising further direct bilateral and multilateral talks," TASS said.

"Both sides confirmed their readiness for constructive coop-

eration in the interest of securing further progress in the peace process," it said.

The White House Friday issued invitations to Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Palestinians to a fresh round of peace talks on Dec. 4 in Washington, following the opening session in Madrid.

Only Jordan has accepted the invitation. Israel, Lebanon and Palestinians said they were still considering it.

A Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official Wednesday welcomed the return of Mr. Shevardnadze, who resigned last December, and said Palestinian leaders would press him to link Jewish emigration and Israeli settlements.

The conventions outlaw settlements on occupied territory.

meetings when Palestinians in the occupied territories showed support for Iraq during the Gulf war, have renewed dialogue since the Madrid conference.

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip demonstrated with olive branches during and after conference to show their support for the historic talks.

The Israeli army barred Palestinians from the northern part of the West Bank from crossing the 1967 border to Israel for another meeting Saturday. Instead the meeting took place at the border known as the green line.

Activists said they planned further meetings.

Ms. Golan said 50 Israeli and Palestinian children met in the Gaza Strip last week to demonstrate for peace.

Britain becomes the first of the Gulf coalition allies to release Baghdad assets seized in the Kuwait invasion crisis nearly 16 months ago.

Britain's Prime Minister John Major described the release as "very welcome news," adding: "I look forward to seeing Ian Richter set foot on British soil again."

"It's wonderful to be out. It's one of those long, dark tunnels and the light suddenly opens," the 45-year-old chemical engineer told reporters after being freed from Baghdad's Abu Ghraib maximum security jail.

"I ran a half marathon this morning, 40 times round a rather bumpy and dusty football pitch and I had no idea this was happening. So I had a shower and was just about to make a cup of tea when I was summoned and told: 'pack your things,'" he said.

Mr. Richter, who spent two Gulf wars in jail and always denied he had tried to bribe Iraqi officials, looked lean, fit and tanned. He said he was well-treated by Iraqi authorities and towards the end turned down an offer of a three-cell suite.

His release was negotiated by Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, the United Nations envoy overseeing relief operations in the Gulf, and followed appeals by King Hussein.

"This is a very happy day indeed. He must be feeling enormous happiness and trepidation," Prince Sadruddin told a news conference at which he announced the Briton's freedom.

Mr. Richter, who telephoned his wife Shirley from satellite phone in Prince Sadruddin's suite, will fly to London Sunday with Prince Sadruddin.

"We spoken to my wife. I think we were both in tears," he said over a glass of champagne with U.N. aides and Iraqi officials.

Under the deal, Britain will unfreeze £70 million of the £400 million (\$640 million) it froze under U.N. sanctions to punish Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

The 'Masri experience' — the forces that were not

This is the second of a series of articles analysing Jordan's democratic experiment, with special emphasis on the experience of the government of Prime Minister Taher Masri, who resigned last week.

By Lamis K. Andoni
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

WHEN THE first general parliamentary elections in 23 years in Jordan were held two years ago, one of its shortcomings was that the balloting preceded the legalisation of political parties. Two years later, analysts argue that the absence of legalised parties to contest the elections, along with other restrictions imposed by the electoral law, had been strongly instrumental in the failure of former Prime Minister Taher Masri to form a broad coalition government.

Some political observers disagree. They argue that parliamentary blocs might not be political parties, but they certainly represent group interests. In practice these blocs were only formed after November 1989 elections and they did not come together on the basis of a declared common political programme during the elections.

But the Democratic Bloc, which has been divided over the peace process and the Masri government,

can be dictated by narrow gains — such as the number of seats each holds in the Lower House rather than to a programme that will hold them accountable to their constituents.

The Democratic Bloc, which politically represents the broader coalition of the major sects forces known as the Jordan Arab National Democratic Alliance (JANDA), has not deviated much from the pattern of the other blocs even though three of its nine members belong to organised leftist groups.

The three, representing Jordan's Communist Party, the Jordan People's Democratic Party and the People's Unity Party, ran in the elections as individuals after His Majesty King Hussein suspended an article in the electoral law banning members from "illegal groups" to seek Parliament seats.

Thus, in a way, Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker's formation of what

has been viewed as "a right of the centre" cabinet could be seen as a natural course of events if only because of the absence of new solid ground rules that allow for an advanced phase of political pluralism.

Political observers, however, are sceptical that new elections based on the amended and a more progressive election law will bring about a fundamental change in the political structure of the parliament.

The present election law is criticised by analysts for its division of electoral districts in a way that reinforces tribal

Middle East News

JORDAN TIMES, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1991

Iraq says it has U.N. approval to fly meat from Sudan

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraqi Airways, grounded by Gulf crisis sanctions, has received U.N. approval to fly to Sudan to collect a cargo of meat, the director of the airline said in remarks published Saturday.

Norrudin Sabi told Iraqi News Agency (INA) that the U.N. Sanctions Committee had approved the flight by one of its Boeing 707s now in Amman to Sudan, where nine million people face food shortages because of drought and war.

Baghdad was now negotiating with the U.N. for permission to fly the meat directly from Khartoum to Iraq in what would be the first flight allowed for a commercial aircraft since the end of the war in February, he said.

This was necessary to stop the meat spoiling on the alternative route, a 12-15 hour drive from Jordan, Iraq's lifeline for imported food and other goods, he added.

The Sudanese government Lieutenant-General Omar Hassan Al Bashir saw itself as a bulwark to a "front of steadfastness" stretching from Iraq through Sudan and Libya to Mauritania and confronting a U.S. "imperialist plot" against the Arab World, diplomats said.

It was one of a handful of countries to stand behind Baghdad during the Gulf conflict.

It has pledged that, despite its domestic problems, it will help Iraq with food and drugs to overcome shortage caused by U.N.

Suspect links AUB blast to Israel, allied militia

BEIRUT (R)

Lebanon said Saturday that a man suspected of a bomb attack on the American University of Beirut (AUB) had confessed that officials from Israel's South Lebanon "security zone" were behind the blast.

But Interior Minister Major-General Sami al Khatib said it was too early to make a formal accusation against Israel or the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia which controls the "security zone."

"This bombing took place according to control from officials in the 'security zone.' This is the logic of the suspect and his complete confession," Mr. Khatib told a news conference.

The suspect, Jihad Al Khalil, was one of five people believed to have carried out the Nov. 8 car-bomb blast that destroyed AUB's college hall administration building and killed a janitor, he said.

"We are faced with a highly-trained intelligence man," he added.

Asked who was behind the bombing, Gen. Khatib replied: "In his (Khalil's) confession he said officials from South Lebanon are responsible for the attack and they demanded that Jihad make breeding stock for their meat."

The Syrian-backed government said the bombing as a bid to sabotage U.S.-backed Middle East peace talks and Beirut's drive for peace after 15 years of civil war, which ended last year.

AUB, a favourite target for militant attacks in the 1980s, has no direct links to the United States but has been the symbolic centre of Washington's influence in Lebanon since it opened in 1866.

Geo. Khatib said a large sum of money was withdrawn from a Beirut bank in the name of Jihad Al Khalil four days before the explosion."

The Syrian-backed government said the bombing as a bid to sabotage U.S.-backed Middle East peace talks and Beirut's drive for peace after 15 years of civil war, which ended last year.

AUSTRALIA: The 1987 U.N. Security Council resolution that ended the war called for a mission to assess the damage in both countries.

It also promised an impartial inquiry to establish who was to blame for the war.

Iran, which says it was the victim of an imposed war, hopes for a favourable verdict that will enable it to press massive compensation claims against Iraq.

U.N. experts report that one of the greatest casualties of the war is the Shatt Al Arab waterway between Iran and Iraq.

A sovereignty dispute over the waterway was one of the causes of the war. Iraq only abandoned its claims in 1990 after international uproar over the invasion of Kuwait.

Experts say some 70 to 80 sunken cargo ships — some believed to be carrying unexploded munitions — still block the waterway, making navigation impossible.

Local people no longer dare to fish in the river. "This is an enormous problem affecting the whole lifestyle of the people," one expert said.

In the port of Khorramshahr, only 6,000 remain of a pre-war population of 167,000. The U.N. says: "The physical destruction of Khorramshahr is almost complete."

There and in the nearby oil town of Abadan — site of what was once the world's largest refinery — the tangled wreckage left by the war amounts to 10 million tonnes of scrap metal.

The U.N. will recommend it should be melted down into ingots.

Southern Sudanese, most of whom are black and either Christians or animists, have been agitating for autonomy from the Arab and Muslim north since the mid 1950s.

The SPLA has been in open revolt since 1983.

Al Sharq Al Awsat said the offensive was Colonel Garang's response to increasing pressure on him in recent months caused by the loss of support from Ethiopia, the SPLA's main foreign backer, and a widespread mutiny against his leadership.

Reports have spoken of up to a third of the SPLA's 50,000 troops joining the mutiny and battles between rival factions.

The split last month forced a postponement of peace talks with the government which had been due to be held in Nigeria.

Al Sharq Al Awsat said the outcome of any offensive against Juba would have a big impact on both the government and the rebels.

It said the fall of Juba would put almost the whole of the south in rebel hands, possibly strengthening those on the rebel side calling for complete secession from Sudan and affecting the standing of the ruling junta in Khartoum.

The newspaper said Col. Garang's forces had also launched attacks much further north in an area about half-way between Juba and Khartoum.

It quoted Sudanese sources as saying rebels and government troops had fought fierce battles around the towns of Kadugli and Dilling.

Fadlallah says no deal behind hostages' release

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's most influential pro-Iranian leader said Friday there was no deal behind the release of Western hostages and complained that the West still expected Lebanese militants to make a deal on Arab prisoners.

Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, the spiritual leader of Shiite Muslim fundamentalists in Lebanon, said the Western hostage saga would be over for humanitarian reasons.

"We have repeatedly said that this file should be closed one way or the other through its humanitarian dimension plus some political aspects," Sheikh Fadlallah said in his sermon at Friday prayers. "It seems that this file will be closed."

Hopes have risen this week that the remaining hostages held in Lebanon by pro-Iranian groups, three Americans and two Germans, will be freed soon.

Two hostages, Briton Terry Waite and American Thomas Sutherland, were released Monday in a breakthrough apparently related to a surprise decision by the kidnappers to separate the case of Westerners from that of Arabs imprisoned by Israel.

Diplomats in Beirut said the kidnappers, who had previously demanded the Arab prisoners in exchange for the Westerners, had given in to Iranian pressure.

Israel will release its prisoners only in exchange for Israeli servicemen missing in Lebanon, or their remains or hard information on their fate.

Sheikh Fadlallah, who has the Shiite religious rank of Ayatollah, said: "If the hostage file is to be closed, then there are (Arab) captives detained by Israel ... why haven't we heard of international demand asking Israel to release them?"

"Why do the Americans and Europeans say that releasing the Western hostages shouldn't be the result of a deal? We have accepted this but why do they insist that freezing the prisoners held by Israel must come as part of a deal with Israel in return for releasing its soldiers?"

"The fact ... is that we Arabs and Muslims are (considered by the West as) worthless."

Israel has released 66 prisoners,

mostly Shiite Lebanese, and returned the remains of nine guerrillas in return for the remains of one soldier and confirmation that two other servicemen missing in

Lebanon are dead.

Israeli leaders said they will not free any more prisoners until they receive information on four missing servicemen, mainly on pilot Ron Arad who was downed in South Lebanon in 1986 and who is known to have survived capture.

U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar has been mediating an end to the Middle East hostage crisis since August, six hostages and the 66 Arabs have been freed since.

A further normalization would be contingent upon genuine progress towards a Middle East peace settlement."

India, which recognised Israel in 1947 but has no diplomatic representation there, has been debating for some months what relationship it should have with Israel.

"It appears to have settled for a glacial approach," said a senior Western diplomat.

"The only things they are prepared to do are very small, such as expanding the area of the Bombay consulate," he said.

Israel's only diplomatic post in India is a consul in Bombay.

Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao met a leading Jewish figure Thursday in a signal that India was ready to reassess its lack of ties with Israel.

Mr. Leibler, co-chairman of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), said he emerged from the meeting hopeful that India would ease what he called its hostility towards Israel.

Officials said India will consider opening a consulate in Tel Aviv to match the Israeli consulate that has operated for many years from Bombay, India's largest city and its business centre.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they expect other gestures — like direct telephone dialing from India to Israel — but no immediate steps towards establishing diplomatic relations.

Mr. Leibler declined to say if he received any concrete promises, and said Mr. Rao had asked him to keep his comments at the meeting confidential.

"I'm excited. I believe India is going through a change, and the obstacles are being reviewed," he told reporters after the meeting.

"The fact that Rao met me is a signal," he said.

The World Jewish Congress is a roving body of Jewish organisations outside Israel that often acts on Israel's behalf.

Mr. Leibler, a 57-year-old Australian, said he told the prime minister that improving ties with Israel will bring material benefits, hinting broadly at India's efforts to attract foreign investments.

"Jewish communities in the world, especially the American Jewish community, are extremely agitated" at India's current position, Mr. Leibler said. "Even today India treats Israel like a pariah."

He said he told Rao that India "should treat Israel no worse than it treats Pakistan and other countries it has been at war with."

Pakistan and India maintain full diplomatic ties, despite having fought three wars.

State-owned Indian companies abide by an official boycott of Israel, though private businesses are free to deal with the Jewish state. Israeli officials say trade is at the level of \$200 million a year, nearly all of it in polished diamonds.

Mr. Leibler's meeting with Mr. Rao was arranged only after the intervention of the U.S. and Australian governments. The Australian foreign minister attended the half-hour talks.

Indo-Israeli ties depend on peace process

NEW DELHI (Agencies) — Improvement in India's relations with Israel depends on progress in Middle East peace talks, a senior Indian official said Saturday.

"The present attitude of the Israeli government is intransigent and somewhat inflexible, so there appears to be little justification for a shift in Indian policy," said the official, who asked not to be identified.

"Any further normalisation would be contingent upon genuine progress towards a Middle East peace settlement."

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MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

U.N. passes suspended for Iranian rebels

UNITED NATIONS (R) — A small group of Iranian dissidents complained Friday their U.N. passes had been temporarily lifted and charged Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar with bowing to the wishes of the Tehran government. A spokesman for the Mujahideen of Iran, Ali Reza Jafarzadeh, told reporters his four-man delegation, here to monitor the annual debate on human rights in Iran in a U.N. committee, had their passes confiscated Thursday by U.N. security guards who said they were acting on the instructions of the secretary-general. Mr. Jafarzadeh said the passes had been obtained through two U.N.-accredited non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that he declined to identify. A U.N. spokeswoman, responding to reporters' questions, said a U.N. member state, which she did not name, complained last week about the alleged misuse of U.N. passes by certain NGO members.

She said the individuals concerned were accused of having entered restricted areas, distributing contentious materials to a lounge and conference rooms, and misrepresenting themselves as representatives of a member state. The secretary-general called for a review of the complaint, and a U.N. working group which deals with NGOs recommended that the passes be temporarily suspended pending further investigation. Despite this, two members of the Mujahideen who complained to reporters said they gained entry Friday by obtaining passes of the kind issued to people paying brief visits to the U.N. building.

Anglican head 'understands' outrage over Rushdie

YORK, England (R) — Archbishop Robert Carey, spiritual head of the world's 70 million Anglicans, called on Friday for greater tolerance of the Muslim sentiment which drove British author Salman Rushdie into hiding from an Iranian death threat.

Mr. Carey, the archbishop of Canterbury, said Mr. Rushdie's novel "The Satanic Verses" contained an outrageous slur on the Prophet (Mohammad) and so was damaging to the reputation of the faith.

"I well understand the devout Muslim's reaction, wounded by what they hold most dear and would themselves die for." In a lecture on religious understanding, Archbishop Carey did not refer to the death order, his comments appeared likely to stoke a renewed debate over Mr. Rushdie, who this week accused the British government of brushing aside his plight as it seeks to improve ties with Iran. Indian-born Rushdie has been in hiding under police guard since February 1989 when Iran's then spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini ordered Muslims to kill him, saying his novel blasphemed Islam.

Morocco protests against Spanish summons

RABAT (R) — Moroccan Foreign Minister Abdulfatiq Filali has expressed concern to the Spanish ambassador over court summonses issued to staff at the Moroccan consulate in Barcelona. A Foreign Ministry spokesman said Mr. Filali conveyed to Ambassador Joaquin Ortega Y Salinas "the serious concern of... (the Moroccan) government regarding the behaviour of the Spanish authorities."

Local press reports Friday said Abdulfatiq Bouabdelli, the Moroccan consul in Barcelona, was charged with irregularities in providing documents for Moroccans living in Spain. The reports said Mr. Bouabdelli and two other members of the consulate staff were questioned by an examining magistrate making inquiries into forged work contracts allegedly issued to about 200 illegal Moroccan immigrants. The Foreign Ministry spokesman said the procedure used by the Spanish authorities was "in absolute contradiction with the terms of the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations." He added that, in an infringement of diplomatic practice, the Moroccan embassy in Madrid not the ministry in Rabat had been informed of the affair.

Senate 'October surprise' probe bogs down

WASHINGTON (R) — A planned U.S. Senate investigation into charges that Reagan-Bush election campaign officials sought to delay the release of American hostages in Iran in 1980 bogged down Friday in the face of Republican opposition. Hours after a Senate panel heard former National Security Council aide Gary Sick tell of his conviction that a secret deal had been made with the Iranians, Democrats failed to get enough votes to clear for debate a resolution authorising an investigation. Democratic majority leader George Mitchell had sought to bring the resolution before the Senate but got only 51 of the 60 votes needed under Senate rules. Republicans opposed the investigation, calling it a politically inspired effort to smear President George Bush during the upcoming election season and insisting the charges are nothing but unfounded rumour. Mr. Bush was Mr. Ronald Reagan's vice presidential running mate in 1980 when he sought the presidency against incumbent Jimmy Carter. Reports have circulated for years that officials of the Reagan-Bush campaign negotiated with Iranian middlemen to delay the release of the hostages until after the November election because they feared a pre-election release — an "October surprise" — would help Mr. Carter. In exchange the Iranians were to get American arms, as they did in secret deals during the Reagan administration. The 52 hostages were eventually released precisely as Mr. Reagan took office as president on Jan. 20, 1981, after 444 days in captivity.

Home News

JORDAN TIMES, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1991 3

Crown Prince Hassan receives U.S. general

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan met in his office Saturday Gen. Joseph Hoar, commander of the U.S. Central Command and his accompanying delegation.

Present at the meeting was His Royal Highness Prince Faisal Ibn Al Hussein, the commander of the Jordanian Royal Air Force and senior army officers.

Gen. Hoar later left Amman after a several day visit to Jordan during which he was received by His Majesty King Hussein as well as Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker.

He also toured a number of military installations and archaeological sites.

Upon their departure, Gen. Hoar and his accompanying delegation were seen off by Army Chief of Staff Fathi Abu Taleb and other senior army officers.



NAMING CEREMONY — In the presence of His Majesty King Hussein, a special ceremony for the naming of Her Royal Highness Princess Aish's son, Abdul Hameed Mohammad Anwar Al Saleh, who was born Nov. 15, was held Saturday at Al Nadwa Palace. The ceremony was attended by

Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan and Prince Faisal, the prime minister, the chief of the Royal Court, the King's political advisor, the King's military secretary, the King's private secretary, the chief judge, other senior officials and members of the Al Saleh family.



Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Saturday meets at the Prime Ministry with Jordanians from



all walks of life as they congratulate him on his forming a new government (Petra photos)

Jordanians call at Prime Ministry to congratulate Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker

AMMAN (J.T.) — Delegations representing various organisations from the public and private sector called at the Prime Ministry Saturday to congratulate Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker for forming Jordan's new government.

Speakers of these delegations voiced their allegiance to the Hashemite leadership and expressed backing to the new government to pursue the process of development and democratic rule.

Among those arriving to congratulate the prime minister were speakers of the Senate and the Lower House of Parliament, former prime ministers, Parliament members, the chairman of the joint Chiefs of

Staff of the Armed Forces and senior officers, the Public Security Department director and his aides, the chief Islamic justice, heads of municipal councils, heads of tribes, notables from the Palestinian refugee camps, journalists, heads of unions and other citizens.

Also arriving to congratulate Sheriff Zeid was the speaker of the Palestine National Council, who was accompanied by the commander of the Palestine Liberation Army.

Members of the new cabinet were reported to have assumed their posts as of Saturday.

Like the former government, the cabinet includes 10 members from the Lower House of Parliament. Among

them is Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Thouqan Al Hindawi who led the Constitutional Bloc in the Lower House of Parliament.

The 18-member bloc held a meeting Saturday and elected Abdul Majid Shreideh as leader of the bloc to replace Mr. Hindawi and Dr. Fawzi Tucimeb as the bloc's rapporteur and official spokesman, replacing Yousef Mbaideen, who became minister of justic

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Ghali deserves support

THE SELECTION of Boutros Ghali as the next United Nations secretary general comes at a time when the world body's stature and effectiveness has reached unprecedented new heights. This makes the recommendation of the U.N. Security Council to the General Assembly to elect the Egyptian deputy prime minister doubly significant. To begin with, the choice of Dr. Ghali marks the first time that an Arab and an African statesman has made it to the top position in the international organisation and that was in no small measure a tribute to Egypt's growing role in international and regional affairs. In this vein, the personal contributions of the U.N. secretary general-elect to national and regional diplomacy must have also made a positive impact on the members of the Security Council enabling them to reach a consensus in favour of the Egyptian statesman in spite of the fact that the list of strong candidates for the post from the African continent and other regions of the world was indeed long.

Furthermore, the African countries had been denied an opportunity to head the United Nations since its inception back in 1945. Most of the others have had the opportunity to have one of their own to fill the internationally-coveted post. This was the time therefore to rectify this imbalance by giving the African nations their first chance ever to lead the world body in an era of international affairs that is both unique and propitious for the advancement of the new world order that is beginning to take shape on the heels of the collapsed East-West rivalry.

Dr. Ghali has lost no time to describe the new challenges of the future as those that will be dominated by North-South dialogue if not outright confrontation. The ever-widening gap between the rich and poor countries has given rise to new forms of tensions in the world prompting fresh impetus to the search for more equitable distribution of wealth among the nations of the world. With this in mind the new U.N. chief is expected to rise to the challenges of the nineties by highlighting the festering North-South conflicts that the new international order will never redress without addressing the issue of poverty and underdevelopment worldwide. This could be the area where the new U.N. leader will want to leave an indelible mark and if he does that, the Arab and African worlds will have succeeded where the others have failed till this point in time.

The acclaimed new U.N. chief deserves all the support that he can get from the international community. The Arab World in particular now has a unique occasion to heal its wounds and back fully the Arab secretary general in a bid to make its word better heard and its grievances addressed more quickly and comprehensively.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I daily Saturday congratulated Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker on forming the new government, wishing it success in its endeavours. The paper, however, noted that the new prime minister had pledged to give due attention to the internal issues as well as matters related to the peace process, and said that one can only look forward to the fulfilment of the contents of the letter of designation to the new government and the prime minister's reply. Sharif Zeid has promised in the reply to the King's message that the new government will embark on measures designed to enhance the process of democracy by ensuring legislations on political pluralism, political parties, press and publication and will go ahead in implementing the economic restructuring programme. This is a pledge which all Jordanians look forward to see implemented, but the government requires close cooperation with the legislative authority if the National Charter is to be implemented. The paper said that the prime minister's pledge means that the process of democracy would be running smoothly but much depends on the cooperation between the government and Parliament. The man in the street is hoping that not only political matters will be tackled but also economic issues and chronic social problems like unemployment. The paper said the public awaits the translation of the pledges and the promises into practices.

THE NEW government of Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker has inherited an accumulation of problems like unemployment and the implementation of the economic restructuring programme which requires strenuous efforts, said a columnist in Al Dustour daily. Saleh Qallab said that the new Cabinet members should not lose any minute since the means and resources are limited and room for manoeuvre is slim. We are hoping that the new government will not only honour our trust, but achieve what has been beyond the reach of the previous governments, said the writer. Since the new prime minister is known to be courageous and firm, we need to see him take action concerning the inherited problems plaguing Jordan, especially in economic matters, unemployment and soaring prices as well as corruption and abuse of public administration, the writer continued. He said that the economic battle requires placing the right man in the right position to deal with this situation. The writer said that the weapon of democracy is useful in all domestic and external battles, but first one has to put one's house in order and strengthen the national unity under the umbrella of democracy.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Budget reveals smooth adjustment

THE draft budget for 1992, which was approved by the outgoing Council of Ministers last week, is supposed to be the numerical translation of the economic adjustment programme in its first year. Based on this assumption we can easily conclude that the programme is extremely soft and does not call for tough measures and sacrifices. The objectives of the programme have been stretched over seven years, till 1998, which allows ample time to absorb its impact with minimum social hardships.

This did not happen accidentally, it was well planned in advance. The government apparently preempted the International Monetary Fund (IMF) by lobbying those behind it, namely America and Europe, who were convinced to exert pressure on the fund to appreciate the difficult situation of Jordan after the Gulf crisis. On the other hand, the Ministry of Finance knew, ahead of time, that 1991 will be the reference point for the determination of the programme objectives and the annual ratios of deficit narrowing. The ministry did not opt for tough measures in the 1991 budget, thus 1992 will see change.

Due to political considerations and some fiscal imagination, Jordan was able to obtain a soft adjustment programme, which may be considered the softest programme, approved by the IMF, that any developing debtor country was able to get away with.

To illustrate the softness of the programme by reference to the 1992 budget, we find that the current expenditure was not lower than the actual figure of 1991, as expected, but higher by 3.35 per cent. The capital expenditure in the 1992 budget is 60 per cent higher, thus making it obvious that the Ministry of Finance is trying to reduce the deficit not only by reduction of public expenditure, which is very painful socially, but also by increasing revenue which is difficult politically. This policy favours the limited-income groups of the population because they are the major beneficiaries of the government public expenditure on services and not the main victims of higher taxation.

The jump by 60 per cent in capital expenditure and the nature of this expenditure as real capital formation, not mere repayment of debt, indicate that the public sector is not on its way to withdraw from the economic life of the country and that the public sector is not being cut down harshly. The estimate of proceeds of company shares that the government will sell to the private sector is only JD 5 million, which is not more than a symbolic step towards privatisation.

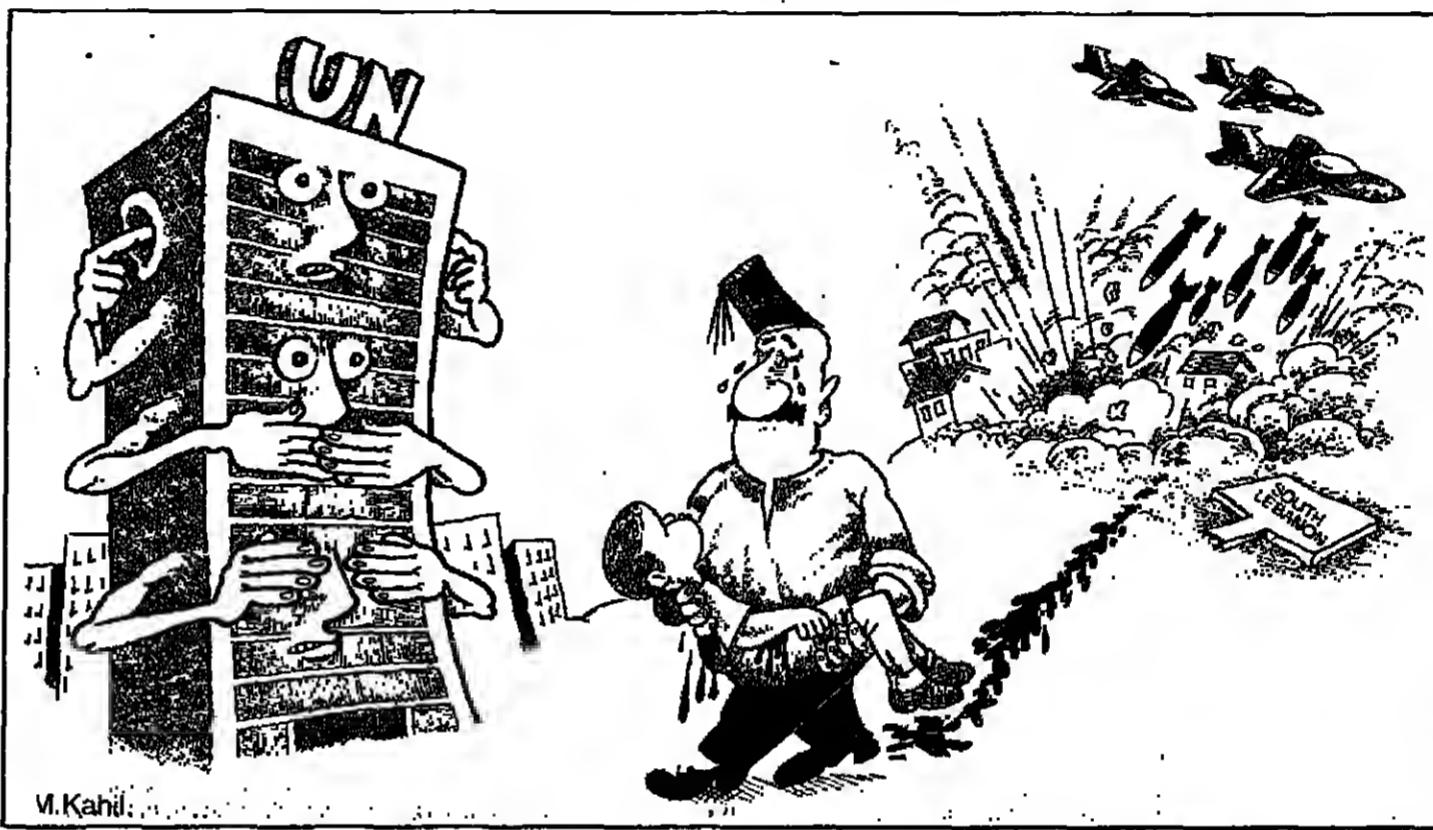
One of the major indications of the softness of the programme is that it will start by increasing salaries by JD 45 million, while the amount earmarked for food subsidies will be reduced only by JD

20, which can be achieved by targeting subsidies to only those who need them, or by gradual increase in the prices of subsidised commodities, or by offering two kinds of bread, one of higher quality at market prices and one in the current quality which continues to be subsidised and available to the limited-income groups.

Equally important, the deficit in the budget was very high, which is not typical for an austerity budget and unheard of under adjustment programmes. The deficit in the new budget was estimated at JD 107 million, but goes up to JD 278 million when we take into account the principal amounts on domestic and external debt which fall due during the year. The deficit becomes JD 533 million if we exclude foreign grants. The latter is the real economic deficit in the budget. It makes 43.5 per cent of the public expenditure or 14.2 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

Having obtained such a soft adjustment programme, perhaps we should impose harsher measures to reform our economy. The reduction of our deficit and the increase of self-sufficiency are more vital and important to us than to the experts of the IMF. At least the programme should not be considered as the ceiling for our reform objectives; it should be the minimum of what we can do.

By Dr. Fahd Al Fanek



U.N. residence. But as soon as he settles into his new surroundings, the veteran Arab diplomat will be embroiled in a sensitive U.N. peace-keeping operation involving inter-Arab rivalries.

The United Nations has already dispatched an advance guard of troops and civilians to oversee a referendum in Western Sahara to enable the inhabitants of the former Spanish colony to choose between independence or incorporation into Morocco.

The operation is already well behind schedule and encountering myriad problems.

There is also talk of sending a U.N. force or presence to Yugoslavia, given a ceasefire in that civil war-torn nation that proves more durable than more than a dozen predecessors.

Reform of the U.N. administration is a task that has baffled a succession of secretaries-general and will tax the ingenuity even of someone familiar with Egypt's own labyrinthine bureaucracy.

All these tasks will have to be accomplished by an organisation whose members often fail to pay their dues on time, but seem ever-ready to load it with new responsibilities.

Unpaid assessments for the regular U.N. budget and for peace-keeping operations stretching from Cyprus to Central America frequently top the one billion dollar mark.

World's vanishing women and girls — 100 million are gone

By Nicholas D. Kristof

PEKING — Little girls in China no longer have their feet crushed by foot-binding, and widows in India are no longer supposed to be roasted alive on the funeral pyres of their husbands.

But a stark statistic testifies to women's continuing unequal status: At least 60 million female adults and children in Asia are missing and feared dead, victims of a bias against females.

Worldwide, research suggests, the number of missing females may top 100 million.

If sex discrimination in the West means office harassment or fewer good jobs for women, in the Third World it often means die at higher rates at every age thereafter.

A traditional parental preference for boys translates quickly in China, India and other developing countries — into neglect and death for girls.

Although the discrimination is widely seen as a relic of outdated attitudes, the problem appears to be getting worse in Asia.

Recently released census data in China and India show that in both countries the sex ratio of the population became more skewed over the course of the last decade.

The tens of millions of missing include females of all ages who are aborted or killed at birth, or who die because they are given less food than males, or because family members view a daughter with diarrhoea as a nuisance but a son with diarrhoea as a medical crisis requiring a doctor.

"If a boy gets sick, the parents may send him to the hospital at once," acknowledged Li Hongui, an official in China's State Family Planning Commission. "But if a girl gets sick, the parents may say to themselves, 'Well, we'll see how she is tomorrow.'

Remarkably little research has been conducted on the plight of the missing women, and even their disappearance is discernible merely as a shadow on the census data and mortality statistics.

"It's shocking that so little is known," said Amartya Sen, a Harvard economist who has tried to call attention to the issue. He estimated that considerably more than 100 million females are missing around the world, and asserts that the reason the shortfall is getting worse in some areas is that girls are not allowed to benefit as much as boys from the improvements in health care and nutrition that are lowering death rates.

Any investigation into the case of the missing women begins with one fact: 5 per cent or 6 per cent more boys are born than girls, but in normal circumstances males die at higher rates at every age thereafter.

Typically in the West, children are disproportionately male, but the number of men and women even out by the time people are in their 20s or 30s. The elderly are disproportionately female.

In countries such as the United States, Britain and Poland, there are about 105 females for every 100 males.

In India, however, a census this year found only 92.9 females for every 100 males, down from 93.4 in 1981 and 93.0 in 1971.

And in China, the 1990 census found just 93.8 females for every 100 males, compared with 94.1 at the time of the 1982 census.

By a conservative calculation there are 30 million females missing in China, about 5 per cent of the national total and more than are missing in any other country.

A U.N. report this summer: "The World's Women" found that other countries with very low ratios of females include Afghanistan, with 94.5 for every 100 males; Bangladesh, 94.1; Bhutan, 93.3; Nepal, 94.8; Pakistan, 92.1; Papua New Guinea, 92.8; and Turkey, 94.8.

"Millions of women have died because they're women," said Sharon Capeling-Alakija, director of the U.N. Development Fund for women, adding that mothers as well as fathers were

better than girls.

This may be because early in life the infants are fed from the breast, which is gender-blind, parents later may favour their sons in allocating food and medical treatment.

Perhaps the most challenging problem statistically is to determine the number of missing females around the world. The difficulty is to derive the sex ratio that would exist in a population if males and females were treated equally.

The ratios in Western countries are perhaps inapplicable to developing countries because of the difference in age structure. A population with a lower average age should have a higher proportion of males, because children are disproportionately male.

Thus a country with a short life expectancy or with a rapidly growing population — both reasons for a low average age — would have relatively fewer females than a Western nation.

Even so, the 2 per cent surplus of females in sub-Saharan Africa and the 4 per cent surplus of females in Kerala may suggest that those ratios are benchmarks for the Third World if they are gender-blind.

If one picks a ratio, such as 103 females to 100 males, as the one that would prevail in an equitable developing country, that would indicate that more than 100 million females are missing around the world.

Huang Baoshan, a spokesman for China's State Family Planning Commission, suggests that at least in China significant numbers of the missing females are very much alive but have eluded census takers because peasants officially limited to one or two children are reluctant to report the birth of a daughter.

Likewise, two studies in India reportedly found that for most of the first year of life, girls had lower mortality rates than boys, but that later in infancy boys did

U.S. decision to postpone troop withdrawals shows resolve

By Kelly Smith Tunney
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — By delaying troop withdrawals in South Korea, the United States is letting North Korea know it is serious about the threat of nuclear proliferation.

U.S. Secretary of Defence Dick Cheney announced Thursday that troop cutbacks scheduled between 1993 and 1995 would be delayed until the dangers and uncertainties of North Korea's nuclear weapons development are addressed.

He called on Communist North Korea to immediately and unconditionally open its nuclear facilities to international inspection, and to publicly announce it will halt nuclear weapons development.

The immediate effect of Mr. Cheney's announcement is to reaffirm Washington's resolve to end nuclear proliferation and to reaffirm its commitment to it in pro-West South Korea.

It's a message that will have wide-ranging reverberations in the Pacific region, giving Washington the chance to show leadership in a part of the world it is widely perceived to have neglected.

About 40,000 U.S. troops are stationed in Korea under a mutual defence pact. A plan to reduce troops to 36,000 by the end of 1992 will continue, Mr. Cheney said. But further reductions for 1993-1995 will be postponed.

With North Korea, the United States appears determined not to repeat the mistake it made with Iraq before the Gulf war by underestimating its potential to produce nuclear warheads.

North Korea has denied trying to build nuclear weapons, just as

Iraq did.

In recent weeks, Washington and Seoul have become impatient with Pyongyang's reluctance to comply with demands to halt nuclear development. The longer the delay, the thinking goes, the more time North Korea gains to develop a nuclear arsenal and to build what intelligence reports say is a reprocessing plant for weapons-grade plutonium.

North Korea for years has demanded the withdrawal of U.S. troops. For the U.S. to pull back troops while trying to pressure the north to come clean about its nuclear capacity would be unwise, experts say.

Northeast Asia is unique in that it engages the interests of four of the world's powers — the United States, the Soviet Union, Japan and China. Strategically, U.S. policy has been that no single nation or coalition of nations should control or threaten the region.

Mr. Cheney said the four powers are fully supportive of a non-nuclear policy for Korea and are moving along with other nations to pressure the north. He said the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency would be asked to cooperate.

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The number of troops affected by a postponement are probably less than 10,000 and maybe only 5,000. But the number is not as important here as the unspoken resolve by the allies to hold firm.

"North Korea should understand how strong our will is," said South Korean Defence Minister Lee Jong-Koo.

Jordan Times

JORDAN TIMES, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1991 5

Secret service accused over illegal, undercover arms-for-Israel project

By Wolfgang Hoffmann

A bid by the Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND), the German intelligence agency, to ship radar-equipped tanks and armoured reconnaissance vehicles billed as agricultural machinery from Hamburg to Israel has failed. It is said to have been made without the knowledge of BND President Konrad Porzner and without export control authority approval. An investigation is underway.

PORT OF HAMBURG police discovered the contraband on board the Israeli freighter Falman II just before it was due to be shipped to Haifa. The shipment, stated on its bill of lading to be agricultural machinery consisted of 14 pallets, two containers and one item of general cargo weighing 36 tonnes.

The pallets contained vehicles of various kinds, covered scantly with tarpaulins: trucks and armoured, tracked vehicles, including radar-equipped tanks and armoured reconnaissance vehicles — mothballed stock of the former East Germany's National People's Army.

It was ordered by the Mossad, Israel's secret service, from the Federal Defence Ministry in Bonn as the owner of ex-East German arms and equipment. The agent in the clearly illegal transaction was the Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND). The men who ought to have known about the deal, Defence Minister Gerhard Stoltenberg, BND President Konrad Porzner and Minister of State Lutz Stavenhagen of

the Chancellor's Office, whose job includes supervising BND activities, knew nothing about anything.

This has always been the scenario as affairs have come to light about the cloak-and-dagger activities of the BND. It took Hamburg's chief public prosecutor, Rüdiger Bagge, only a brief look at the cargo to decide to plunge straight into judicial investigation. The inaccurate shipping documents and the lack of export approval for arms to Israel make it seem more than likely that breaches of the Arms Control Act and the Foreign Trade Act involved.

Mr. Bagge said: "As far as we know the shipment consists of arms. We haven't unloaded them all yet, but those we have so far seen can all be classified as arms and military equipment."

A clearly nervous Federal government spokesman, Norbert Schäfer, tried to play down the importance of the incident: "As part of day-to-day business, friendly intelligence agencies swap information on all manner

of issues, including security policy. Intelligence in this context can include military equipment and, in plain words, weapons. Over the years Germany has been supplied with weapons — singly, as samples — by countries including Israel. This time the exchange was intended to go in the reverse direction." That figures. As Israel's "hostile" neighbours are mainly equipped with arms supplied by the former Warsaw Pact, especially from the Soviet Union, it makes sense to check details of otherwise inaccessible arms and equipment, to test and to evaluate them. Israel is reported to be particularly interested in the electronics of Soviet arms and equipment. Christian Democrat Hans Sterken, chairman of the Bundestag's Foreign Affairs Committee, says: "I can understand that."

The way in which the BND's "farm machinery for Israel" operation was organised is anything by understandable. There wasn't the least need for the cloak-and-dagger action described the Social Democrats' foreign policy spokesman Norbert Gansel as a "classic case of arms smuggling by order of the state."

There is a longstanding tradition of German arms shipments to Israel, as the late Franz Josef Strauss, a staunch supporter of

close ties of this kind, readily admitted in his 1989 memoirs. Free of charge, he wrote, the Federal Republic of Germany had shipped to Israel arms and equipment worth DM 300 million, a present-day DM 1.2 billion, "an aid mission that was totally in breach of budget regulations."

Arms and equipment had even been shipped secretly from Bundeswehr depots and stripped of German markings, sent to Israel via France. Later, when Helmut Schmidt was Chancellor, Israel was shipped German submarines via Britain. The Chinese were supplied by the BND with the latest in electronic eavesdropping equipment for installation along the Sino-Soviet border. It was evidently used by BND staff as a source of intelligence information. No mention was made of the equipment, worth DM 50 million, in official accounts. The cash came from the Defence Ministry's Tornado multi-role combat aircraft budget.

The BND's arms smuggling operations in the 1960s, a flourishing trade conducted jointly with the Bonn arms dealer Gerhard Mertins, were no less notorious. The BND decided which countries Mr. Mertins was to supply with a full range of arms and equipment: tanks, aircraft, ships, firearms, missiles and

ammunition. Some of these deals were conducted with bogus documents; all went ahead without the knowledge of the government agency in charge of arms exports.

Mr. Mertins was later tried but found not guilty because "all illegal business listed in the charges was arranged, controlled and conducted with the approval of representatives of either the BND or the Federal government of the day."

The records of the Mertins case are still classified. But he must have done an enormous amount of business. He sued the Federal government for damages, claiming the case had ruined his reputation, and was awarded roughly DM 5 million in compensation. So compared with the business he did on the BND's behalf the latest case is small fry. But whether the culprits can expect to get off scot-free this time is another matter.

Mr. Herr Porzner said he was not informed, and he seems to have been away on a short holiday when the officials who arranged the shipment decided to sneak it through without his approval. He ordered a review of

the affair and issued instructions that in future decisions of this kind were only to be reached with his approval. But that won't make much difference. Instructions to that effect were already in force; agency officials merely

head of department at the BND? BND President: Porzner, who knew nothing about it? Or Minister of State Stavenhagen at the Chancellor's Office, who knew even less? Or all three of them?

The opposition has trained most of its guns on Mr. Herr Stavenhagen, whose reputation has already taken a knock in connection with the Schalck-Golodowski affair. It still isn't clear whether Mr. Herr Stavenhagen deliberately lied to the SPD's Peter Conradi when he told him that Mr. Schalck, East Germany's former foreign exchange wheeler-dealer, had not been issued with false papers by the BND.

Former BND President Hans-Georg Wiegand stands by his claims to have briefed Mr. Herr Stavenhagen on the move and the reasons behind it. The documents available indicate that he could certainly have put two and two together. His failure to do so hardly shows him to be the right man to keep an eye on the secret service. Yet unless an eye is kept on it, any intelligence service can do just what it pleases. — Die Zeit, Hamburg.

Remote Soviet islands claimed by Japan could be sale of century

By Gareth Jones
Reuter

YUZHNO-KURILSK — They're already calling it the real estate deal of the century. But the landlord can't decide whether he wants to sell, and the prospective buyer is unsure how much it's worth.

Not that these beautiful, remote North Pacific islands shouldn't fetch a good price. They have abundant reserves of gold, silver and other precious metals, as well as volcanoes, hot springs and empty beaches. The waters that lap their quiet shores teem with salmon, crab and shrimp.

There is another side to life in this secluded archipelago, however.

Most of the 47,000 inhabitants in this Far Eastern outpost of the Soviet empire live in ramshackle, barrack-like houses of wood and stone. The roads, where they exist at all, are mud tracks that dissolve when it rains.

Now residents must contend not only with poverty and neglect, but with uncertainty and the fear their homes may be sold.

They are convinced that Moscow, some 6,000 kilometres and eight time zones away, is ready to strike a deal with Japan and hand them over to Tokyo in return for billions of yen to help rescue the crippled Soviet economy.

Japan claims Kunashir, Etorofu, Shikotan and the Habomai cluster as its northern territories, saying Moscow illegally seized them in the closing days of World War II.

Tokyo has refused to sign a formal peace treaty until the islands, near its main northern island of Hokkaido, revert to

Japanese rule. Since the dramatic thaw in East-West relations, the Japanese media have been floating estimates of between 10 and 30 billion dollars in economic aid if Moscow agrees to return the islands. At such rates, the effective price paid could be as much as \$25,000 an acre (\$60,000 an hectare).

"We are living on the edge of a volcano," said Natalya Cherkashin. She said she goes to bed every night terrified she will wake to find her home belongs to the Japanese.

"We're sure to become second class citizens if Japan takes control. I would have to leave."

Thousands of islanders turned out recently to welcome their new governor, Valentin Fyodorov, whose main island of Sakhalin, an 18-hour boat journey from Kunashir, rules the islands known by the Soviet Union as the southern Kuriles.

Mr. Fyodorov, described by local media as "the defender of the Kuriles" has vowed a campaign of demonstrations and strikes to prevent any transfer of the disputed islands to Japan.

"It would be a crime before all Russia to sell these islands to Japan. They are not four outcrops of barren rocks, they are the jewels of our Soviet Far East," Mr. Fyodorov, a former Moscow University economics professor, told an emotional crowd in Yuzhno-Kurilsk, capital of Kunashir.

His views are echoed by most of the islanders, who have come from all parts of the Soviet Union, drawn by the promise of higher wages and longer holidays, to work mainly in the fishing

industry. Their hostility is aimed more at the bureaucrats in Moscow than their Japanese neighbours. They have, after all, been living side by side for more than four decades.

Only 16 kilometres of water separates Kunashir from Hokkaido, whose mountains can be seen on a clear day from this crumpling, makeshift town.

Children comb the beaches for lighters, beer bottles and fragments of clothing and footwear washed up from Japanese fishing vessels that poach the salmon-rich waters.

Islanders can tune into weather forecasts, Sumo wrestling and quiz shows late night men's shows beamed across the narrow straits by Japanese television.

Some would quiet like to see the rising sun flying again over their impoverished island home.

"The Japanese won't drive us out," said Valery Predibailov.

"They need our labour, and we're cheaper to employ than

their own people. You won't recognise this place after a year if the islands are given back."

In a letter to a local newspaper, Tatjana Smuchenko said she wanted to live with the Japanese. "We certainly wouldn't live any worse under them than we do now. I want to try living in a capitalist paradise."

At a local school pupils write (in English) to Japanese penfriends on Hokkaido. Some are even learning Japanese.

Schoolteacher Andrei Danevich, a native of St. Petersburg, said people who leave often return after two or three years on the mainland for the island's mild climate, mountains and gentle pace of life.

It's a close-knit community where everyone knows everybody else. But it's also a microcosm of the whole country with Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Tatars and Balts living together amicably," he said.

Besides, most of the original inhabitants who lived there have either died or are too old to move back."

By 1948, all 17,000 Japanese inhabitants of the four islands had fled or been evacuated by Soviet troops.

Opinions differ on the

Japanese side, too, over whether the islands should be returned.

On Feb. 7 every year — Northern Territories Day — Japan commemorates the signing of an 1855 treaty which it says recognises its sovereignty over the four islands. Some 40 million signatures have been collected in petitions across the Japanese archipelago demanding their return.

Privately some Japanese express doubts.

"I think the islands should be given back to Japan, but it will be expensive to bring them up to our standard of living with proper roads and modern facilities," said Fusayuki Kanda, an academic from Hokkaido.

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Sports

Sabatini stops Capriati, to meet Seles in semis

YORK (R) — Third seed Isela Sabatini dominated an unusually error-prone Jennifer Capriati 6-1 6-4 to set up a semifinal showdown with top-seeded, defending champion Monica Seles at the \$3 million Virginia Slims Championships.

Earlier Friday, Seles came through on the big points to eliminate seventh-seeded American Mary Joe Fernandez 6-3 6-2 in a match that was far tighter than the score indicates.

Saturday's other semifinal pits five-time champion Martina Navratilova, the fourth seed, against fifth-seeded Czechoslovak Jana Novotna, who Thursday sent second seed Steffi Graf to her earliest exit ever from this elite 16-player season finale.

Sabatini, champion in 1988 and runner-up to Seles in an epic five-set final last year, always seems to play extremely well on the blue carpet at Madison Square Garden and Friday night was no exception.

"It is very special to be back here. I'm very happy to be in the semifinals again," said Sabatini, who had lost her last three meetings with Capriati, including a U.S. Open quarterfinal.

The 15-year-old sixth seed has been playing with a strained groin muscle and Sabatini tested her early, running Capriati around the court and repeatedly sending her deep into the corners.

The tactic seemed to work, but Capriati said the injury was not her problem.

"Mentally I wasn't really there," said Capriati, who finished the year with two titles and a 42-12 match record.

The whole match she was playing so well. I would hit a great shot and she would just send it back."

Capriati opened the match with a service break, but failed to win another game in the set. She lost her serve in the second, fourth and sixth games as Sabatini consistently nailed the lines and corners with deep topspin groundstrokes, while the American teen pushed too many shots wide.

Capriati, who has qualified for the championships in each of her two years as a professional, tightened up her game in the second set, but Sabatini was just too sharp.

"I tried to use the whole court and make her move around. Mentally I was playing each point

at my best," said the 21-year-old Argentine.

Capriati came up with the first break of the second set, fighting hard and finally converting her third break point of the game.

But Sabatini easily broke back in the next game.

A seventh game service break gave the third seed the edge she would need to end it in straight sets.

Capriati, who aggravated the injury in a final against Seles in Philadelphia last week, said she never thought of pulling out of the tournament.

"It was up to me and I wanted to play," she said. "I was working for this the whole year and I didn't want to miss it."

Seles and Fernandez played extremely high quality tennis throughout their quarterfinals, with few points won easily by either player.

"I think the match was pretty close. It was out 6-7 6-7, but I had to really work for some great points," said Seles, who this year seized Graf's number one ranking and will eclipse Navratilova's 1991 season earnings mark of \$2,173,556.

The match came down to Fer-



Jennifer Capriati

nandez's inability to convert break points or the Yugoslav's ability to fight through them. She saved all four break points she faced, while converting three of eight against the American.

Asked about her strategy for Saturday's semifinal against Sabatini, Seles said: "I'll just have to go out there and play wonderful tennis."

"I am just going to have to give everything that I have."

complete a remarkable string of reaching 16 finals in 16 tournaments this year.

HARROGATE, England (R) — Two tired men battling for the world title face up Sunday at the start of the Rac Motor Rally, final round of the 1991 championship.

Carlos Sainz and Finland's Juha Kankkunen are both feeling the strain and the Spaniard has not had a chance to recover fully from a major accident in September's Australian event.

"But last year was not so good when I had a big accident here which left me in a neck brace for weeks. It took me until the middle of this year to get back on form," he said.

Sainz must finish in the top five and ahead of Lancia's Kankkunen to keep his title after five victories this year. The Finn has four wins to his credit.

Like his rival, "Kankka" loves the Rac.

"I hope that FISA (The International Motor Sport Federation) will make rule changes next year about the number of events," Sainz, 1990 world champion with Toyota and winner of the Rac last year, said.

"I hope that the schedule is becoming impossible."

The Spaniard is fighting to defend his crown after failing to finish two of the last three rounds of the world series, crashing in Australia and losing his car's electrics in Spain. But he is optimistic about the Rac.

He said: "It's my favourite rally, although I would be happier if I could be in it for pleasure rather than fighting for the world title. It's a rally of surprises, showing in one place, raining in

another, fog in another, but I love the forests and feel I can win again."

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Sainz ran away with the early part of the 1991 series, winning in Monte Carlo, Portugal, Corsica, New Zealand and Argentina. But Kankkunen came back with victories in the safari, Acropolis, 1,000 Lakes and Australian events and comes to Britain with a seven-point lead going for his third world title.

While the spotlight is firmly on these two, there are another 16 drivers who will be doing battle over 37 special stages, through in northern England, Wales and Scotland before finishing four days later back at Harrogate.

Although Toyota has decided against sending its other two regular entries to support Sainz, Lancia has three factory cars with ex-world champion Miki Biasion of Italy and France's Didier Auriol backing Kankkunen.

The French League ruled Thursday that the incident-ridden match should be replayed on a neutral ground. St Etienne goalkeeper Joseph-Antoine Bell was struck by a stone thrown by a Marseille fan during the game, won 1-0 by St Etienne.

Papin threatens to end soccer career

PARIS (R) — French international Jean-Pierre Papin has threatened to walk away from soccer if allegations persist that he feigned injury after being struck by a beer bottle.

"I could stop playing football if my honesty is put in doubt again," Papin, who plays for champions Marseille, told French radio Saturday.

Papin was hit by a bottle as he left the players' coach before a league match in St Etienne last month. He fell to the ground and was taken to hospital, missing the game.

St Etienne President Andre Laurent said Thursday Papin's behaviour was a "piece of trickery". St Etienne doctors had earlier told the French press Papin had feigned injury.

Papin's lawyer Herve Gevrotian said he would sue Laurent for libel.

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SPORTS NEWS IN BRIEF

Borg still hopes to return to tennis

STOCKHOLM (R) — Five times Wimbledon champion Bjorn Borg still hopes to return to competitive tennis despite the failure of his comeback attempt this year. Borg, 35, who won his last Wimbledon title 11 years ago, plans to play on the seniors' tour next year before a possible return to the ATP circuit. "I might play five or six veteran tournaments next year," Borg told the Swedish daily Aftonbladet in an interview published Friday. "But they are not my big goal. I want to comeback to real competition as well." Borg's first comeback attempt started and ended with an embarrassing defeat in the first round of the Monte Carlo Open this year. "This time I will do it more slowly," he said. "I was not ripe for the Monte Carlo Open. I hadn't trained enough, above all I was not mentally prepared."

UEFA replaces stadium ban with fine

GENEVA (R) — UEFA's appeals board Saturday lifted a home stadium ban on Torino for their fans' misbehaviour and fined the Italian club 120,000 Swiss francs (\$75,000) instead. UEFA's Control and Disciplinary Committee handed out the punishment last week, because Torino fans fought with police and destroyed seating at the away leg of their UEFA Cup second-round tie with Boavista of Portugal on Nov. 6. The appeals board said in a statement that Torino's fans had been provoked and were not wholly to blame for the incidents. The punishment imposed on Boavista of playing their next two home-leg ties in future UEFA club competitions at least 200 kilometres from their stadium would stand as the club had not appealed, the board said. The sanctions were for poor security arrangements and their own fans' misbehaviour.

Capelli replaces Prost at Ferrari

MARANELLO, Italy (R) — Italian Ivan Capelli will drive for the Ferrari Formula One motor racing team next season, Ferrari said. Capelli replaces former world champion Alain Prost, dismissed by Ferrari before the final race of the Grand Prix season. Capelli, 28, left Britain's Leyton House team in October. Capelli, who will team up with Frenchman Jean Alesi, is Ferrari's first Italian driver since the departure of Michele Alboreto in 1988.

Paris to hold Champs Elysees parade

PARIS (R) — Paris, overcoming disappointment at its failed bid for the 1992 summer Olympics, will give the Albertville's winter games flame a sumptuous welcome on the Champs Elysees on Dec. 14. Mayor Jacques Chirac announced Friday that the Olympic flame, flown from Greece aboard a Concorde supersonic airplane, would be paraded up the avenue amid fireworks with 10,000 costumed young people taking part in a \$3-million pageant. "The Champs Elysees are the most beautiful theatre in the world," ski superstar Jean-Claude Killy, triple gold medalist in 1968 and co-chairman of the Cojo '92 Albertville Organising Committee, told a news conference. The flame will then be carried through France by 5,000 young men and women taking turns to run one kilometre each to the Alpine town of Albertville for the opening ceremony on Feb. 8. The Olympic flame was last in France for the 1968 winter games at Grenoble.

Tired drivers battle to line for world title

HARROGATE, England (R) — Two tired men battling for the world title face up Sunday at the start of the Rac Motor Rally, final round of the 1991 championship.

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PARIS (R) — French international Jean-Pierre Papin has threatened to walk away from soccer if allegations persist that he feigned injury after being struck by a beer bottle.

"I could stop playing football if my honesty is put in doubt again," Papin, who plays for champions Marseille, told French radio Saturday.

Papin was hit by a bottle as he left the players' coach before a league match in St Etienne last month. He fell to the ground and was taken to hospital, missing the game.

St Etienne President Andre Laurent said Thursday Papin's behaviour was a "piece of trickery". St Etienne doctors had earlier told the French press Papin had feigned injury.

Papin's lawyer Herve Gevrotian said he would sue Laurent for libel.

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Analysts expect more losses on Wall Street



George Bush

NEW YORK (R) — Wall Street stocks, which have prospered despite the sluggish U.S. economy, are losing ground as investors turn pessimistic, fearing that political indecision is pushing a recovery further into the future. The Dow Jones industrial average's dumpy ride downward began with a 120-point tumble on Nov. 15 that was seen as a watershed for this year's bull market. A feared market collapse did not follow the one-day plunge. But in the past week the Dow lost 40.47 points — 1.4 per cent — to

end at 2,902.73.

Analysts expect more losses before the year-end as investors scramble to take profits. Confusion over economic policy in Washington has done little to boost investor confidence.

"I think what we witnessed over the past week has been a dramatic shift in investor psychology," said Bradley Turner of McDonald and Co. "The result of that shift was the unwillingness to look beyond the bad news."

Investors first became unnerved by Senate passage of a bill to cap interest rates charged on credit cards. The proposal, which was aimed at stimulating consumer spending, raised fears that it would instead worsen the credit crunch and hurt bank profits.

The White House said President George Bush would veto any such measure and Congress later backed off.

The markets received another jolt on Thursday on rumours — later denied — that the Bush administration would give tax credits to buyers of U.S.-made cars.

"It definitely looks like there's plenty of bad news out there for the bears, both on the political and economic fronts," said James Wright, portfolio manager at Bank One Ohio Trust.

"We have a basic environment in which the Federal Reserve has cut rates enough to eventually

stimulate the economy," Mr. Wright said.

But I think there's great potential for a drop (in stocks). This administration is very accident-prone, and the potential for political mis-steps is very high," he pointed out.

Analysts said stocks have been vulnerable to a pullback. Before the sharp drop on Nov. 15, smaller issues as represented by the NASDAQ index were up about 40 per cent this year.

Biotechnology stocks in particular had been buoyed by a long wave of speculative buying.

But after bidding up shares in anticipation of an economic recovery, investors have grown impatient with the pace of growth, analysts said.

The Dow, which hit a record closing high of 3,077.15 on Oct. 18, was now likely to slip to 2,800, 2,850, they said.

"We've been in a very speculative market cycle," said Frank Kennedy, chief market strategist at Equitable Capital Management Corp. "The speculation got overdone particularly in the health-care sectors."

But he and other analysts said the bullish case for the market is still intact.

"The primary thing that drives a bull is the direction of rates," said Mr. Kennedy. The Federal Reserve last cut the discount rate by a half-point to 4.5 per cent on

Nov. 6.

The economy bottomed in the second quarter, there's no question about that, and the recovery is somewhat slower than normal. That's an ideal environment because short-term rates are flat to down," he said.

That means the stock market still looks attractive to investors faced with the alternative of extremely low returns on other investments.

In general, it's shaping up to be winter of discontent between American business and President Bush over economic policy.

A rising chorus of business leaders say they are still waiting for consistent, well-articulated economic policy from the White House.

"We're just prayerfully hoping that somewhere in Washington, leadership will solidify," said Gordon Macklin, chairman and co-chief executive officer of Hambrecht Quist, a securities brokerage firm in San Francisco.

"I think Bush is baffled and confused on economic policy... that is eroding confidence in him among Democrats who were favourably disposed to him as well as Republicans," said Jim Kline, owner of Accent Chicago, a retail chain in the midwestern U.S. city.

More and more grumbling can be heard among business executives

— bankers and brokers — traditionally bastions of Republi-

cans can support — about an appearance of White House uncertainty on how to help the country out of recession.

The critics say this impression has been reinforced in recent weeks as the Bush administration has failed to react strongly to a spate of bad economic news and a variety of tax-cut proposals on Capitol Hill to stimulate the economy.

While Republican strategists and administration officials say they are aware of business complaints, they say it's unlikely many businesses will start supporting the Democrats, who tend to favour more government intervention in business.

"You have very shaken community of business leaders, chamber-of-commerce types," said Glen Bolger, a pollster at Public Opinion Strategies, a Republican polling firm. "There's nervousness and a sense that they want the president to show concern and do something."

"But I'm not too concerned about it because I know they are not going to vote for Tom Harkin or Mario Cuomo," Mr. Bolger said, referring to one Democrat who is seeking his party's presidential nomination and another who may do so.

But a senior administration official sounded more troubled about the unrest in the business community.

"Some people in the administration are worried about it," he said. "(Vice President) Quayle and (Commerce Secretary Robert) Mosbacher pick up lots of discontent."

"An enthusiasm loss among business groups over the long run can translate into a vote loss," said the official, who asked not to be identified.

At the Washington-based U.S. Chamber of Commerce economist William Macneynolds recited a litany of what he called "errors of omission and commission" by the Bush administration.

The lack of a growth plan concerns people in the industries hard-hit by recession, like construction and automobiles," Mr. Macneynolds said.

"Then there's the tax increase last year, the management of the dreadful thrift bailout, the enormous increase in regulation that businesses face," he continued.

"And while you can blame a large portion of it on Congress, the president has gone along with it," he said.

But for many business leaders,

the problem with Mr. Bush is not so much his economic policies as how he presents them.

"The fact is there is this illusion

that the country is rudderless," said Hambrecht Quist's Macklin.

"They (administration officials) have communicated a fundamentally sound economic policy in a way that is defensive, that does not show much concern for the real human tragedies that are out there."

Robert Dugger, chief economist for the American Bankers Association, said to-ing and fro-ing on economic issues by the White House and Congress had created enormous uncertainty.

One example of this was Mr. Bush's recent call for lower credit-card interest rates, followed by a congressional proposal to mandate lower rates, Mr. Dugger said. Both Mr. Bush and Congress backed off after the markets reacted badly.

"The level of uncertainty that comes just from government actions alone is unprecedented," Mr. Dugger said. "We don't know when the rules are going to change."

White House chief of staff John Sununu, in an interview with Business Week magazine, blamed some of the administration's confusion on business leaders themselves.

"He (Bush) talks to large business versus small business, and the advice quite often has self-conflicting components," Mr. Sununu said.

Specialists study Aden for free trade zone

ADEN, Yemen (R) — U.S. specialists have started a \$4 million survey of Aden as part of a drive to turn Yemen's economic capital into a free trade zone, an official has said.

Free Zones Administrative Board official Ahmad Abdallah Al Qadi said the year-long social and economic survey would include roads, power plants, water and sewage systems, telecommunications, air and sea ports and the ageing oil refinery.

Many of the services have not been changed since British rule ended 24 years ago.

The survey was being carried out by the U.S. firm United Engineers and Contractors, a subsidiary of the Denver-based Raytheon Company, Mr. Qadi said.

Local engineers had been assigned to work with the U.S. team, Mr. Qadi said.

The survey would help assess improvements needed for turning Aden into a free trade zone.

He also said the Free Zones Authority had prepared a draft bill covering Aden's future administration. The bill, providing for exemptions from taxes and fees and offering equal opportunities for local and foreign investors, was expected to be approved by the government by next June.

Proposed privileges include lifting of current controls, guarantees against any possible nationalisation of property or confiscation of assets, as well as easing of export and import restrictions.

Located on Europe's main shipping lanes to Asia and East Africa, Aden was a bustling international port during 130 years of British rule. Marxist revolutionaries took over after independence in 1967.

The refinery attracted little foreign interest, partly due to the isolation of Aden's then-Marxist rulers, but last year's merger be-

tween north and south Yemen enabled it to process crude oil produced in the north.

MEES said that of the oil now being processed, 60,000 b/d was Yemeni Marib crude carried by tanker to Aden from a Yemeni terminal further north on the Red Sea. Some 40,000-50,000 b/d of products is for domestic consumption and the rest is exported.

The remaining 50,000-60,000 b/d processed is Omani and Iranian crudes refined for coastal and vital of the United States and Malaysia's Petronas, it said.

MEES said the refinery was planning to build new storage tanks with a capacity of 196,000 barrels at a cost of some \$50 million, to be financed by the refinery itself.

Meanwhile, the Aden oil refinery, once one of the world's largest and a vital supplier of fuel for ships, has apparently doubled its business after union between the two Yemens and a change of political direction.

The authoritative oil newsletter Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) has said the refinery, which has a capacity of 170,000 barrels of crude oil per day (b/d), 110,000-120,000 b/d, has raised through put to its highest level for years.

The refinery had hoped to reach those levels in 1990 but its plans were disrupted by the Gulf war, MEES said. It did not give a previous throughout level but industry sources in September put this at about 60,000 b/d.

The refinery, built by British Petroleum in 1954 but now state-owned, saw its fortunes decline after the closure of the Suez Canal at the time of the Middle East war in 1967 which led to a major change in world oil shipping routes. It has run at less than half capacity since.

Taiwan currency reserves top \$78b

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan's foreign currency reserves, the world's largest, have soared to a record high of about \$78 billion, a senior central bank official said Saturday.

The reserves, boosted by Taiwan's trade surplus and interest earnings, jumped to \$77.2 billion at the end of October, central bank governor Samuel Shieh told a news conference.

The figure compared to \$76.4 billion in September and the previous record of \$76.7 billion at the end of 1987.

Mr. Shieh declined to give the current size of the reserves. But a senior central bank official said the figure was about \$78 billion.

Another official said the reserves would rise further to about \$80 billion by the end of the year.

Local bankers said the rise was caused partly by central bank intervention in the foreign exchange market.

MOSCOW (R) — The Russian parliament Friday said it was taking over control of the last bastions of Soviet central economic power, the state bank (Gosbank) and the bank for foreign economic affairs (Vneshekonombank).

A radical resolution, approved by an overwhelming majority, put the twin pillars of Soviet finance firmly in the grip of the giant republic.

But deputies declined to give Russian leader Boris Yeltsin direct jurisdiction over the financial institutions.

The resolution made Russia's central bank "the only body on Russian territory responsible for state-monetary, credit and currency policy, the main aim of which is to strengthen the ruble."

The government of Byelorussia, the third most powerful republic, issued an order shortly afterwards closing all its hard currency accounts with Vneshekonombank.

Gosbank is currently responsible for Soviet monetary policy and issuing currency, while Vneshekonombank handles

vicing of the country's foreign debt of about \$70 billion.

Byelorussia ordered the transfer of its hard currency to a republieco bank within two weeks, TASS news agency said.

Last week, Mr. Yeltsin signed several decrees taking control of central ministries, gold reserves and most of foreign trade.

Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev is campaigning for the creation of a political union between the republics but many republics seem bent on pursuing their own economic policies.

Financial stability is regarded as crucial for efforts to form an economic union and to maintain vital foreign credits.

The Russian moves followed an agreement by at least eight republics, including Russia and Byelorussia, on assuming joint responsibility for repaying foreign debt and authorising Vneshekonombank to continue servicing it.

That accord cleared the way for a major aid package from the Group of Seven (G-7) leading industrialised nations.

Russia's central bank will take control of the activities of Vneshekonombank by Dec. 15 and it will be registered as a commercial bank responsible for servicing Soviet foreign debt.

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Warring Yugoslav leaders meet to discuss U.N. peace role

GENEVA (R) — Warring leaders from Yugoslavia met in Geneva Saturday to discuss the possible introduction of a United Nations peace force in the Balkan state.

The meeting, which came as pressure by the Serbian-led armed forces appeared to be mounting against breakaway Croatia, was called at short notice by U.N. special envoy Cyrus Vance, a former U.S. Secretary of State.

Mr. Vance's aide Herbert Okun said the aim of the talks was "to pursue discussions on the feasibility of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Yugoslavia."

At the meeting, which began just after 2 p.m. (1300 GMT), were Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia and General Veljko Kadijevic, Yugoslav federal defence minister, Mr. Okun said.

The three flew into Geneva, seat of the U.N. European headquarters, soon after Mr. Vance, who left Belgrade earlier in the day after a week there assessing the prospects for deploying a U.N. force.

Mr. Vance, appointed by Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar to probe the possibility for a role for the world body

in bringing peace to Yugoslavia, was chairing the meeting.

Also present, Mr. Okun said, was European Community peace envoy Lord Carrington, a former British foreign secretary who has spent weeks seeking to negotiate a firm ceasefire.

Fighting between the Serbian-led federal army, which Gen. Kadijevic effectively commands, and Croatian forces has intensified since the gradual collapse of the last ceasefire called on Nov. 16.

Mr. Vance summoned the Geneva talks after an emergency meeting with Lord Carrington in Belgrade Friday, and diplomats in the Yugoslav capital said it could make or break EC and U.N. efforts to stop the fighting.

The Yugoslav News Agency, Tanjug, said the two envoys had met Federal Foreign Minister Budimir Loncar and told him a permanent, unconditional ceasefire was essential before U.N. troops could be sent.

Asked how long the Geneva talks would last, Mr. Okun said: "They will leave when they are finished."

But diplomatic sources said the meeting was unlikely to go beyond Saturday, and that Mr. Vance would report to Mr. Perez de Cuellar on the outcome Sunday.

U.N. security guards mounted

a special operation to keep reporters away from the meeting, in the old wing of the Palais des Nations which was built in the 1930s as the headquarters of the League of Nations, the U.N.'s predecessor.

A U.N. official said Mr. Vance, who is secretary of state under President Jimmy Carter in the late 1970s championed open diplomacy, had himself requested the measures to allow the talks to be held without media pressure.

Serbs and Croats have strongly different views on how and where a U.N. force might be deployed.

Serbs and representatives of the 600,000-strong Serbian minority in Croatia say they should separate the warring sides inside Croatia.

But Croatia, which declared its independence from Yugoslavia in June, says U.N. troops should be stationed on its official borders, now largely overrun by the federal army.

Scores of people, many of them civilians, died during the army's capture of Vukovar after a three-month siege and federal forces have launched a new offensive around nearby Osijek.

Croatian radio said Osijek and villages around it were attacked by the army during the night and again Saturday morning.

Firing was reported along a 30-kilometre front at Nova Gra-

diska in central Croatia, it added.

Tanjug said, however, that the war fronts were calm with only sporadic artillery duels around Osijek.

Diplomats said failure to agree a new ceasefire could end EC and U.N. efforts to stop the conflict.

"I think this is the crunch, particularly for Vance," a senior Western diplomat said.

He indicated that the army's push towards Osijek after the bloody surrender of Vukovar convinced Lord Carrington and Mr. Vance to take urgent action.

"If the army carries on like this and tries to turn Osijek into another Vukovar, then there is not much point in our carrying on," the diplomat added.

Meanwhile in an interview for the Croatian television, former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher eblided Britao and other Western countries for not recognising Croatia and supplying arms to the breakaway republic to defend itself in Yugoslavia's civil war.

"I said earlier to people over whom I would have hoped to have some influence that I thought as the hostilities got worse and worse and more and more Croatians were being killed and massacred it would have been right to have recognised Croatia and Slovenia as independent," she said.

Timor investigator says Portugal caused killings

JAKARTA (R) — A member of an Indonesian commission investigating the army killing of East Timorese protesters accused Portugal of being behind the incident, the official Antara News Agency said Saturday.

Up to 180 people were reportedly killed when troops fired on mourners in Dili, the capital of the former Portuguese colony, on Nov. 12, the official death toll is 19.

"The Dili incident was created by the government of Portugal by setting up an organisation (which is against Indonesia) and pitting (East Timorese) against each other," said Hadi Wayarabi a director of the Foreign Ministry.

The official is also a member of seven-man government commission set up to investigate the shooting.

Antara quoted him as saying Lisbon had tried to discredit Indonesia which annexed the territory 16 years ago shortly after Mr. Jopling.

Mrs. Thatcher, 66, showed in the ITN interview that she had lost none of the schoolmarm-like bickering of her years in power as Britain's longest-serving prime minister this century.

She was at her most dogmatic in opposing loss of British sovereignty to a United Europe and in trumpeting her patriotism.

Opposition politicians made much of old wounds over Europe being opened amongst Conservatives, who must call an election before mid-1992.

Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown said: "Mrs. Thatcher has dispensed with the camouflage ... the battle lines are drawn and there is now open conflict between Mrs. Thatcher and the government."

He was also linked to a bribery scandal involving the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), but he was not charged with wrongdoing in connection with BCCI.

"Attorney General Pedro Mendez, exercising the faculties granted him in law, charged former Alan Garcia with embezzlement of state funds," said a one-page statement released shortly after Mr. Mendez presented the charges before the

Portuguese's decolonisation.

Portugal has long campaigned against Jakarta's rule there and demanded that the 750,000 East Timorese determine their own future.

The head of the commission Djaelani, appealed for a copy of the film taken during the shooting.

"Help us find it to use as material because it certainly includes data we must collect," the Supreme Court judge told reporters Saturday.

The film, shown in several countries, includes graphic scenes which appear to contradict the army version of events that the soldiers were provoked and opened fire after misunderstanding an order, according to diplomats.

Mr. Djaelani has promised a thorough and objective investigation. The commission will go to East Timor Thursday but did not say how long it would stay.

Peru's ex-President Garcia charged with embezzlement

LIMA (R) — Former President Alan Garcia was formally charged Friday with embezzlement in office, becoming the first former leader in Peruvian history to face such charges.

Mr. Garcia, 42, who was president from 1985 to 1990, has denied any wrongdoing. He was accused last month by Peru's senate of embezzeling some \$400,000 while in office.

He was also linked to a bribery scandal involving the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), but he was not charged with wrongdoing in connection with BCCI.

"Attorney General Pedro Mendez, exercising the faculties granted him in law, charged former Alan Garcia with embezzlement of state funds,"

said a one-page statement released shortly after Mr. Mendez presented the charges before the

Supreme Court.

It gave no further details.

An aide to Mr. Mendez said Mr. Garcia was not charged in connection with the bank scandal, in which two Peruvian Central Bank officials are accused of accepting \$3.6 million in bribes from the BCCI in return for placing \$270 million in reserves in the bank in 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Garcia, who had been a senator for life, was stripped of his parliamentary immunity by the senate last month after it accused him of embezzlement.

The charge came after the attorney general spent a month reviewing the some 6,000 pages of documentation submitted to his office by Peru's congress.

Mr. Garcia called the vote "political persecution inspired by fear" on his enemies part that he or his centre-left Aprista Party will return to power.

Khmer Rouge acknowledges Sihanouk as head of state

BANGKOK (R) — The Khmer Rouge joined Cambodia's other political factions Saturday in recognizing Prince Norodom Sihanouk as head of state.

The Maoist group said in a broadcast it "would like to solemnly and officially state that ... Norodom Sihanouk remains Cambodia's legitimate and rightful head of state since before 18 March 1970 to this day and until there is a new president resulting from free and democratic elections."

March 18, 1970, was the date then-premier and head of state Prince Sihanouk was overthrown by General Lon Nol in a U.S.-supported coup.

The Vietnam-installed Phnom Penh government Wednesday recognized Prince Sihanouk, at one time its most outspoken foe, as the head of state of all Cambodia.

Sou Samn, head of the U.S.-backed, anti-Communist Khmer People's National Liberation

Front, said Thursday when he returned to Phnom Penh from a long exile that he had never stopped recognizing Prince Sihanouk as head of state.

The fourth Cambodian faction is the Sihanoukists themselves.

The factions are gathering in Phnom Penh for a meeting of the U.N.-mandated Supreme National Council, which will represent Cambodian sovereignty until U.N.-supervised elections are held in 1993.

The Khmer Rouge, responsible for the deaths of a million Cambodians during their 1975-1979 rule of the country, said they issuing the statement on Prince Sihanouk to make Cambodia's history "conform with truth and reality," said the broadcast, which was monitored in Bangkok.

The Khmer Rouge also broadcast a message from Prince Sihanouk thanking them for their decision.

The former monarch said the

U.S. congressmen seek any Soviet aid they can win

WASHINGTON (R) — Influential members of the U.S. Congress sought President George Bush's support for aid to the Soviet Union which they said was needed to head off potential chaos there that could raise a nuclear threat.

Diplomats said failure to agree a new ceasefire could end EC and U.N. efforts to stop the conflict.

"I think this is the crunch, particularly for Vance," a senior Western diplomat said.

He indicated that the army's

push towards Osijek after the bloody surrender of Vukovar convinced Lord Carrington and Mr. Vance to take urgent action.

"If the army carries on like this and tries to turn Osijek into another Vukovar, then there is not much point in our carrying on," the diplomat added.

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Sen. Boren said he drew that assessment after meeting with Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director Robert Gates and Yevgeny Primakov, a senior adviser to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Senators and members of the House of Representatives introduced a variety of proposals for helping the Soviet Union. They ranged from a \$1 billion emergency winter food plan to assistance solely to help Moscow reduce and

control its nuclear arsenal.

House Armed Services Chairman Les Aspin and other House leaders introduced the \$1 billion aid plan but Mr. Aspin told reporters: "We'll take anything we can get."

With possibly less than a week

left before Congress adjourns for the year, Mr. Aspin said, it was "problematic but not impossible" to win any Soviet aid at all.

He said aid supporters, therefore, would simply press a variety of different proposals and seek both Mr. Bush's and then Congress' approval of as many of them as possible.

A coalition of senators tried to arrange a meeting with Mr. Bush to win White House support but Mr. Bush left for his Camp David weekend retreat without meeting them.

Mr. Aspin's \$1 billion plan was dropped from a defence bill last week because of congressional complaints that unemployed Americans should get economic aid first.

It would authorise Mr. Bush to divert up to \$1 billion in defence money to have U.S. military planes fly food and medicine directly to areas with severe shortages, and to help reduce and control Soviet nuclear weapons.

Mr. Aspin said the \$1 billion aid plan would be a clear U.S. defence programme because it would help prevent food crises or other chaos from returning hard-line Soviet leaders to power and resuming the cold war.

The chief Senate proposal would authorise only nuclear weapons aid — use of up to \$500 million of defence money for technical advice and aid to help Moscow destroy nearly 15,000 of its estimated 30,000 nuclear weapons and is now friendly.

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Sen. Boren, Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn of Georgia and more than a dozen other senators, Republicans as well as Democrats.

COLUMN 8

Singapore suspends Women's magazine

SINGAPORE (R) — Singapore has suspended publication of the local magazine "Woman's Affair" after an article critical of women parliamentarians, a spokeswoman for the Ministry for Information and Arts said. "The publication is temporarily suspended," she said. "The government has asked the editor to explain why it has chosen to go beyond its scope of featuring women's lifestyles, fashion and careers to make a statement about our women MPs." The magazine, published by World Publishing, is a fashion and shopping monthly which rarely mentions politics. The editor was not available for comment.

That proposal is backed by Sen. Boren, Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn of Georgia and more than a dozen other senators, Republicans as well as Democrats.

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He said aid supporters, therefore, would simply press a variety of different proposals and seek both Mr. Bush's and then Congress' approval of as many of them as possible.

A coalition of senators tried to

arrange a meeting with Mr. Bush to win White House support but Mr. Bush left for his Camp David weekend retreat without meeting them.

Mr. Aspin's \$1 billion plan was dropped from a defence bill last week because of congressional complaints that unemployed Americans should get economic aid first.

Sen. Boren, Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn of Georgia and more than a dozen other senators, Republicans as well as Democrats.

The chief Senate proposal would authorise only nuclear weapons aid — use of up to \$500 million of defence money for technical advice and aid to help Moscow destroy nearly 15,000 of its estimated 30,